

SUMMARY

People in the City of Gloucester love their home-city - largely because it really is a PLACE, as the Vision states, a place to live, to work, to learn and appreciate, and because of that, a place to visit. Those were the sentiments expressed in the Community Development Plan, 2000 planning process in a variety of ways: through photographs submitted to the Photo Essay project, through contributions to a long list of Special Places, and in comments during meetings, workshops, and Forums. The Vision for the City reflects that thinking.

Furthermore, the residents like the city as it is, and they hope to maintain the present character as much as possible, placing high value on the diversity of people, cultures, talents and skills, work opportunity, and spectacular natural beauty. Where change is inevitable, people express a desire to manage that change in a way that new will blend and fit in with what is already here. Where change is preferred: cleaning and repairing the city, providing for housing for all income levels, and stimulating job placement so that people can live and work in the city, people want pro-active policies and actions to encourage change, and they want to be involved in planning for those changes.

During the two years of discussion, people from throughout the city were encouraged to participate in the Plan 2000 planning process, called "citizen-driven" by the Planning Board, charged by City Charter and State law to produce a plan. "Citizen-driven", it was, as Plan 2000 participation grew and reached out to residents of the city, eager to be included. Together, those participants raised issues, discussed issues and arrived at ways to resolve differences of opinion and value, and explored ways of working to meet the Vision of maintaining the character of the city.

Plan 2000 participants prepared a set of Goals and Objectives and developed Strategies for reaching those Goals and Objectives, which are presented in this Plan as policy recommendations and suggestions for actions. The intent is that this Plan will guide, rather than dictate, official decision-making in the city and will influence public, private and individual actions in the next five to ten years. The following is a brief summary of the City of Gloucester Comprehensive Plan:

ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

The Plan is comprehensive in scope, and establishes coordinated recommendations that address fundamental, citywide issues. It is organized by categories linked to City administration and regulation. These elements are interrelated; the order of presentation does not express priority.

The Land and its Resources

This section of the Plan focuses on the physical environment of Gloucester.

- Land Use - The Plan calls for new policies and regulations on land use, to protect the quality-of-life and environmental and visual assets, to increase the supply and decrease the cost of housing, and to control the intensity of use by following existing development patterns. It establishes the basis to revise zoning and subdivision regulations that meet performance standards, and to create new tools to manage growth and realize Plan objectives.
- Open Space - The Plan establishes a process to set priorities for the preservation and protection of private and public open space and recommends establishment of an Open Space and Recreation Committee to plan and manage open space protection.
- Natural Resources and the Environment - The Plan reinforces existing policies to protect environmental and natural resources by recommending new actions and regulations to preserve water, air, and the very rock and ledge upon which much of Gloucester is built.

Community Focal Points

This section addresses protection and enhancements of special districts of Gloucester.

- Harbor and Waterfront - The Plan incorporates recommendations of the Harbor Plan and provides additional recommendations to enhance public access and water-dependent use.
- Downtown - The Plan recognizes the importance of the downtown to the civic and economic life of the city and provides recommendations to bring renewed resources to its stewards, the Downtown Development Commission and City departments.
- Villages and Neighborhoods - The Plan proposes processes to reinforce the distinctive qualities and identities of villages and neighborhoods, so that they are not blurred by sprawling new development.

Life of the City

This section of the plan proposes ways to enrich the quality-of-life for everyone.

- Housing - The Plan calls for City actions that will promote an increased supply of quality housing for all levels of income, with modifications in land use regulations and practice, supporting increased density, where appropriate. A Housing Coalition of multi-discipline housing interests, to address and assist in housing issues, is recommended.
- The Economy - This Plan recommends that the City prepare an Economic Plan and take

actions to expand the local economy and support excellent jobs for residents. It emphasizes the role for the City to support infrastructure that will allow businesses to grow and expand. The Plan recognizes the importance of tourism to the local economy and recommends actions that enhance the value of tourism, while protecting the character of a genuine, living community.

- Historic Resources - The Plan calls for actions and recommends methods and assistance to protect historic places, and to celebrate the heritage of the city. It includes suggestions for actions by the Historical Commission and Historic District Commission.
- Education - The Plan links educational priorities to broad community goals, with emphasis on literacy programs, adult training and education, and other programs that serve the community's needs and aspirations, in addition to continued commitment to quality education for children.
- Arts and Culture in the Community - The Plan recognizes Gloucester as home to an extraordinary artistic and cultural community and suggests actions to strengthen both the artistic and economic aspects of this wealth of expression. These include promoting opportunities to connect with the community through the efforts of the Gloucester Cultural Council and the Committee for the Arts.
- Health and Social Services - The Plan seeks City and public support for continued acute care services at the Addison Gilbert Hospital. It recommends actions for the Health Plan Steering Committee and City action to maintain a healthy environment through enforcement of regulations and attention to public health issues.

Public Infrastructure

The health of the city is determined in large part by the infrastructure that supports it. This Plan asserts that public infrastructure should be managed to meet planning goals.

- Transportation - The Plan recommends taking steps to direct and calm traffic and prioritize and implement improvements to public safety. It promotes expansion of the bus system, supports improvements at the rail stations, encourages expansion of water transportation, and recommends sidewalk upgrades to encourage walking. It recommends a Mobility Planning Committee and preparation of an Access Management Plan.
- Public Facilities and Services - The Plan places high value on quality services to maintain quality-of-life and value to the entire community. It recommends linking decisions on public facilities and services to the larger context of the City's goals through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

Planning and City Administration

The Plan recognizes the need to broaden the decision-making process. It calls for improved coordination among the actions of the Mayor, City Council, boards, commissions, City departments, and the public, through planned communication and participation and public information. Coordination and communication is assigned to the Community Development Department, which will require organization and staff adjustments. And finally, the Plan recommends a process to monitor progress on implementation of this Plan.

Implementation

Any plan is successful only in its implementation. With thoughtful new direction for policy and rule changes recommended throughout this Plan, a system of implementation is required and is supplied in an Implementation Table. This Table outlines tasks, assigns responsibility and suggests a time-line and priority for actions throughout the next ten years. The Implementation Table will be useful to City staff, boards and commissions and to the Plan Implementation Committee and Planning Board, as they monitor progress and conformance. Most important, the Plan and Table can be used by interested citizens to maintain stewardship for the City Vision and to assess actions and decisions.

Acknowledgements

This section includes a list of participating residents and City staff, who gave time, thought, and creativity to the process.

Plan Approval

The Planning Board approved this Plan, by unanimous vote, on August 13, 2001.